

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 DOE-15 SOE-02 HA-05
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R 201758Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3112
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY QUITO

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 6802

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ECIN PBOR PGOV SENV PEPR VE
SUBJECT: THE AMAZON PACT

REF: STATE 180478

SUMMARY: REACTION TO THE AMAZON PACT HAS BEEN GENERALLY
FAVORABLE WITH SOME CRITICISM COMING FROM OPPOSITION COPEI
PARTY POLITICIANS. FOR VENEZUELA, THE PACT REPRESENTS THE
CULMINATION OF A POLITICAL RAPPROCHMENT BEGUN LAST YEAR.
THE ACCION DEMOCRATICA PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE HAS ALREADY
ENDORSED THE PACT, BUT IF IT IS NOT RATIFIED BEFORE PRESIDENT
PEREZ LEAVES OFFICE, IT COULD FACE DIFFICULTIES UNDER A
COPEI ADMINISTRATION. THE GOV HAS REITERATED THE PACT'S AIM
AS COOPERATION RATHER THAN INTEGRATION IN THE AMAZON BASIN.
GIVEN THE POINTS OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIVERGENCE, THE
PACT SHOULD BE VIEWED AS AN INITIAL EFFORT TO DEVELOP
CLOSER RELATIONS WITH BRAZIL RATHER THAN A MAJOR ADVANCE IN
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ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH THE GOB. NEAR TERM OPERATIONAL
IMPLICATIONS OF THE ACCORD ARE LIKELY TO BE MINIMAL. END SUMMARY.

1. OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC REACTION TO THE AMAZON PACT HAS BEEN
GENERALLY FAVORABLE WITH PRESS EDITORIALS PARROTING GOV LINE
PRAISING SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACCORD. DURING AND AFTER
NEGOTIATIONS, THE GOV TOUTED THE PACT AS AN INSTRUMENT TO

PROMOTE COOPERATION AMONG AMAZON BASIN NATIONS RATHER THAN A TREATY OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION. THE NEED TO FIND A MEANS OF COOPERATING IN AN ECOLOGICALLY RATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMAZON BASIN AND THE NOTION THAT THE PACT REPRESENTS AN EXAMPLE OF LATIN AMERICAN COOPERATION (RESERVING EXPLOITATION OF THE REGION TO L.A.) WAS ALSO STRESSED. OPPOSITION TO THE PACT HAS BEEN VOICED, PRIMARILY BY FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER CALVANI UNDER SOCIAL CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT (COPEI) PRESIDENT CALDERA, WHO CRITICIZED THE PEREZ ADMINISTRATION FOR NEGLECTING VENEZUELA'S AMAZON REGION DEVELOPMENT BEGUN UNDER CALDERA, AND HINTED THE ACCORD UNDERMINES THE ANDEAN PACT.

2. FOR VENEZUELA, THE AMAZON PACT REPRESENTS THE CULMINATION OF A POLITICAL RAPPROCHMENT WITH BRAZIL BEGUN LAST YEAR. HISTORICALLY, THE LEVEL OF COMMERCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL RELATIONS HAS NEVER BEEN SUBSTANTIAL BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. DURING THE 1960'S, BRAZIL'S PROGRAM TO DEVELOP THE AMAZON FRONTIER REGION GENERATED NEW APPREHENSIONS OF BRAZILIAN EXPANSIONISM ON THE PART OF ITS AMAZON BASIN NEIGHBORS. IN TURN, BRAZIL VIEWED THE CREATION OF THE ANDEAN PACT AS AN EFFORT BY ITS SPANISH -SPEAKING NEIGHBORS TO ISOLATE IT WITHIN LATIN AMERICA. THE COPEI ADMINISTRATION OF RAPHAEL CALDERA (1969-73) BECAME EVEN MORE CONCERNED WITH THE PERCEIVED THREAT OF BRAZILIAN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL HEGEMONY AND RESPONDED WITH AN AMAZON FRONTIER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OF ITS OWN (CONDESUR) AND AN ACTIVE POLICY OF DIPLOMATICALLY
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ISOLATING BRAZIL FROM ANDEAN PACT MEMBERS. FOR THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION, PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ CONTINUED VENEZUELA'S COOL BUT CORRECT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOB.

3. IMPETUS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF THE AMAZON PACT AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE BRAZILIAN INITIATIVE FOR CLOSER TIES WAS BASED ON SEVERAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS BY THE GOV: (A) FIRST, THE NATURAL DESIRE ON THE PART OF PEREZ, DESPITE THE SOMETIMES SHARP DIVERGENCE OF NATIONAL INTERESTS, TO IMPROVE AND ESTABLISH CLOSER COLLABORATIVE TIES WITH ITS POWERFUL NEIGHBOR TO THE SOUTH. PEREZ REALIZES SUCH AN ACCOMMODATION IS NECESSARY WITH BRAZIL IF VENEZUELA ASPIRES TO FURTHER EXTEND ITS INFLUENCE IN L.A. AND DEVELOP A COHERENT POLICY FOR LATIN AMERICA AS A WHOLE; (B) IT STEMS ALSO FROM PEREZ' OUTSPOKEN ADVOCACY OF LATIN AMERICAN INTEGRATION AND THE THESIS THAT A KEY TO L.A. DEVELOPMENT LIES IN GREATER ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND COLLECTIVE ACTION, AND THE COROLLARY REALIZATION THAT BRAZIL HAS A KEY RLE TO PLAY IN THIS GOAL. (C) FINALLY, PEREZ, AS AN ADVOCATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN L.A., CONSIDERS A RAPPROCHMENT WITH BRAZIL, IN WHICH THE AMAZON PACT PLAYS AN INTEGRAL PART, AS

MEANS OF ACTING AS A MODERATING FORCE ON THE AUTHORITARIAN
BRAZILIAN REGIME.

4. THE ACCION DEMOCRATICA (AD) PRESIDENT CANDIDATE, LUIS
PINERUA ORDAZ, HAS ALREADY BLESSED THE AMAZON PACT COMMITMENT
IN A MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY STATEMENT, AND THE RATIFICATION
PROCESS SHOULD ENCOUNTER NO REAL DIFFICULTIES UNDER AN
AD/PINERUA ADMINISTRATION. AS NOTED ABOVE, THE MAJOR
OPPOSITION TO THE PACT HAS COME FROM THE OPPOSITION COPEI
PARTY POLITICIANS WHO HAVE CONTINUED TO HINT THAT THE ACCORD
COULD UNDERMINE THE ANDEAN PACT AND THAT IT RAISES THE
SPECTER ONCE AGAIN OF EXPANDING BRAZILIAN POLITICAL AND
ECONOMIC INFLUENCE. THEY ALSO COMPLAIN THE PACT COMMITS
VENEZUELA TO A TREATY WHOSE OBLIGATIONS ARE NOT CLEARLY
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SPELLED OUT. THESE VIEWS REFLECT BOTH CALDERA'S GENERAL
ANTIPATHY MENTIONED ABOVE AND ELECTION YEAR POLITICS.
IF THE PACT IS NOT RATIFIED BY VENEZUELA BEFORE PEREZ LEAVES
OFFICE IN 1979, A COPEI ADMINISTRATION COULD DELAY OR EVEN
BLOCK THE RATIFICATION PROCESS, ALTHOUGH IT IS MORE LIKELY
THAT IT WOULD RELEGATE IT TO JUST ANOTHER DEAD LETTER TREATY
IF OPPOSITION WITH THE COPEI PARTY IS STRONG. FURTHER
OPPOSITION MAY BE GENERATED BY THE LEFTIST PARTIES OPPOSED
TO THE PACT BECAUSE OF THEIR ANTIPATHY TO THE BRAZILIAN
REGIME, BUT SUCH OPPOSITION WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO
BLOCK RATIFICATION AGAINST ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT OF THE PACT.

5. THE GOV HAS REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THE PACT'S AIM AS
COOPERATION RATHER THAN INTEGRATION IN THE AMAZON BASIN.
GIVEN THE PRESENT AND PROJECTED LEVEL OF COMMERCIAL AND
ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH BRAZIL (NOMINAL), THE ORIENTATION
OF VENEZUELA'S CURRENT NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (IN
WHICH THE COUNTRY'S AMAZON REGION PLAYS LITTLE PART), AND THE
DIVERGENT POINTS OF NATIONAL INTEREST BETWEEN BRAZIL AND
VENEZUELA (OIL PRICES, HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT,
SOME POSITION ON NORTH-SOURTH DIALOGUE), THE PACT SHOULD
PROBABLY BE VIEWED AS AN INITIAL STEP ON THE LONG ROAD OF
DEVELOPING CLOSER RELATIONS WITH BRAZIL RATHER THAN A MAJOR
ADVANCE IN ECONOMIC COOPERATIONS WITH THE GOB. GOOD RELATIONS
WITH ITS ANDEAN PACT PARTNERS REMAIN A PRIORITY AND THE GOV
WOULD REJECT ANY EFFORT TO DEVELOP ECONOMIC COMPONENTS OF
THE AMAZON PACT WHICH WOULD THREATEN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION
PROGRESS MADE BY THE ANDEAN PACT COUNTRIES. APART FROM
SOME POSSIBLE INFORMATION EXCHANGE, THE NEAR TERM OPERATIONAL
IMPLICATIONS OF THE ACCORD ARE LIKELY TO BE MINIMAL.
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